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AUTHOR Bowers, C. A.
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ABSTRACT

One of the major concerns in education reform is the recognition of problems within society that affects or has the potential to affect the achievement of students in school. This book attempts to put in focus what the priorities should be in thinking about the challenges facing public school and university education in the United States and other countries that have followed Western approaches to modernization. Reformers should take account of how the cultural beliefs and practices passed on through schooling relate to the deepening ecological crisis that may actually strengthen the cultural orientation that is undermining the sustaining capacities of natural systems upon which all life depends. Chapter 1, "The Cultural Aspects of the Ecological Crisis," establishes a framework for considering the ecological consequences of an educational process that reinforces a set of cultural beliefs and practices formed during a period of Western history when the plenitude of the natural environment seemed to hold out the promise of unlimited economic expansion and social progress. Chapter 2, "The Conservative Misinterpretation of the Educational Crisis," takes the reader through the conservatives' arguments on the nature of the educational crisis, and what they consider as the remedy. Chapter 3, "The Liberal Impasse: Technocrats and Emancipators," turns to a consideration of the liberal technocrats who are the dominant group in teacher education and professional in-service training, and the emancipatory traditions of educational liberalism. Chapter 4, "Anthropocentrism in Textbooks," assesses the cultural values and beliefs communicated through textbooks, and how they relate to the ecological crisis. Chapter 5, "Toward Deep Changes in the Educational Process," has two major sections: (1) the inability of traditional methods to provide an adequate basis for learning to live in ecological balance; and (2) a presentation of the basic ideals of Gregory Bateson. Chapter 6, "The Political and Spiritual Dimensions of the Ecological Crisis: Toward a New Sense of Balance" considers whether the mainstream Western culture that guides and gives substance to educational practices has overvalued the efficacy of the political process and undervalued the importance of spiritual development. (ZWH)

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